

# CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, INC.

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## BULLETIN

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### War Programs and Legislation for Child Care

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**T**HE rise in juvenile delinquency and the need of day care for children of mothers employed in war industries have been the outstanding trends in the field of child welfare since the war and have been of growing concern to the child care agencies. While provisions have been made in many communities to meet situations arising from emergency war conditions, it is recognized that many essential services for children are still inadequate or entirely lacking.

Recently the League made an inquiry by mail to determine the extent of such child care needs and how they are being met. A defense brief sent to members, affiliates, and associates asked for comment on the increase in child neglect, juvenile delinquency, child labor, and moral hazards in their particular cities or states, and how far these might be attributed to the lack of customary parental supervision. Other information was solicited regarding the effectiveness of present programs subsidized by Federal funds, indications of unmet needs for different types of day care, and the overtaxing of protective services. Agencies were asked to give their position on legislation such as that embodied in the Thomas bill to extend day care services under the auspices of the U. S. Children's Bureau and Office of Education.

Response was received from 47 agencies, representing 36 cities and 22 states, of which at least 32 are in "war-impacted areas." Statistics, surveys, reports of state or city-wide conferences and studies were the basis of information given in more than half of the

replies. Experience of the agency and of other qualified observers who had been consulted, such as juvenile court judges, welfare councils, and committees for children in wartime, was embodied in another large group of replies. The remainder presented for the most part the personal opinions of the writers. Interest and understanding of the problems on which attention was now focused were usually related to the level of development of existing child welfare

programs, and to community awareness and efforts in behalf of children.

A report of the material gathered by the League was requested by many of the agencies. It is presented in digest under the topics most generally discussed.

#### *Juvenile Delinquency*

In 19 areas, statistical or other factual evidence of an increase in juvenile delinquency is given. Even where there is no increase, change in the kind of offenses that occur is thought to be of significance. In areas where

military camps have been established particularly, "teen age problems" are predominant among girls: sex delinquency, running away, incorrigibility, drinking. The venereal disease rate is alarming, and some increase in young unmarried mothers is found.

For boys, there seems to be some decrease in certain types of delinquency in older age groups attributed to opportunities for work and for being useful, but offenses that may indicate less family control and supervision, such as truancy, petty larceny, and vandalism, are reported to have increased.

In two communities, a decrease in the rate of juvenile delinquency is ascribed to greater opportunities for work and supervised recreation programs.

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\* Mrs. Turitz will be remembered as the League's former Information and Publications Secretary.

Several agencies question an actual increase in juvenile delinquency, but point out that "it has never been adequately recognized or prevented" and that "we are now simply awakening to a situation that has always existed." Another writes that, "we have no reliable figures for measuring proportionate increases of juvenile delinquency and neglect, though there is more concern for the first."

Measures to cope with and prevent delinquency have been taken in less than half the communities reporting. Where there has been concerted community action, state or city-wide conferences have been called to draft preventive programs. Committees have been formed of civic leaders, educators and welfare workers, such as youth security and juvenile protection groups. The Department of Social Welfare of New York conducted hearings on delinquency in Buffalo.

In three states the Children in Wartime Committees of the Office of Civilian Defense have extended their activities beyond day care programs. Five agencies report studies and surveys to analyze underlying causes and to relate a program to the total community situation, such as housing, recreation and education.

Recreation programs with adequate facilities and leaders are most frequently recommended. They are successfully functioning in at least four communities, with a related decrease in juvenile delinquency.

### *Neglect*

Information received does not factually substantiate a general increase in the number of neglected children, although news clippings dramatize "door key" children and children neglected while mothers are at work. Opinions are numerous that children are not receiving adequate care because of disruptions of family life and because of working mothers. Surveys and interviews with women in war plants indicate that, as a rule, they have made arrangements for the care of their children by relatives, neighbors, and during the summer by older brothers or sisters. How suitable such arrangements are cannot be determined. While several agencies are finding that their protective services are overtaxed, and others expect them to be, no appreciable increase in neglect cases were reported as coming to the protective agencies and courts.

It is not possible to measure the degree to which children are receiving inadequate care, short of neglect, from such evidence. The demand for day care facilities by women who are already working and those who would want to take jobs implies a concern

for the kind of care which their children should have. The effect on children of the loss of parental attention and control does not necessarily constitute neglect, but it may be sufficient to warrant careful consideration of what substitutes are being provided.

### *Child Labor*

The number of children working has increased, according to nine agencies. In one state, largely agricultural, the minimum age has been lowered because of the manpower shortage. Many children who worked at high wages during the summer do not wish to return to school. In some instances, jobs are thought to have a stabilizing effect on young people, making them feel useful and responsible. Others believe that boys and girls now have too much money to spend and do not know how to use their independence wisely. Several communities have no way of ascertaining child labor violations, and others choose to overlook them.

### *Day Care for Children*

The outstanding development in child welfare during the war has probably been the setting up of facilities for the day care of children whose mothers have gone to work. Increased opportunities for women who must or wish to supplement family incomes, the demand for their services because of manpower shortages and the draft of fathers, are expected to create still greater need of provisions for day care. Organized labor, the War Manpower Commission, and local groups have urged the establishment of centers and nursery schools to free more women for war production. Many social agencies have had increased requests for day care and other types of foster care, from women who wish to take jobs. In rural areas, small cities, and among migratory labor groups, facilities have been entirely lacking.

*Day Care Centers.*—In twenty-five communities centers are now in operation to give all day care, usually with Federal subsidies, under the auspices of local school departments or defense councils. Two other communities report a need for such centers. Existing centers are considered adequate in 12 communities. In seven, they are filled to capacity and more are required. In six, the centers are not being sufficiently used. Failure of women to use the centers to capacity is usually due to their ignorance of this resource.

*Foster Day Care.*—Foster day care services have been made available or are being developed by nine agencies, and are found to be particularly suited to the care of children under two, and for twenty-four-

hour service. In one small city, the homes are found to meet the needs of all children better than day care centers. Other agencies report that the homes which they have are not used enough.

An insufficient number of homes, due to housing shortages, lack of homefinding staff, and fewer families wishing to offer their homes, has interfered with the development of a foster day care program in most communities. Transportation difficulties are the chief cause of failure to use homes sufficiently.

*Nursery Schools.*—Nursery schools have been used in eight communities, of which two do not find them to be warranted. The chief difficulties have been the "matching money" provision, which makes cost prohibitive to a large group of mothers needing the service. The closing down of the W.P.A. nursery schools has left many children without this type of care. Successful operation of nursery schools is thought to be better assured if they are not limited to children of employed mothers, but open to any child whose family has been affected by the war.

*Extended Day Services.*—Seven agencies comment on programs for after-school or extended day services and four others cite the need of such services. The emphasis has been on supervised recreation facilities for children of school age, particularly in rural areas, where activities can be most expediently centered in the school. This type of care is usually related to the community recreation programs which are considered well-developed in only four replies.

*Placement.*—Only one agency has had increased applications for placement by mothers who wish to work. Placement services appear to be generally handicapped by shortages of staff and of foster homes.

*Referral Centers.*—Four cities have centers which are performing the service of counseling mothers and acquainting them with existing resources. The need for such service is recognized by other agencies, along with wider publicity and parent education about day care programs.

#### *Limitations of Present Programs*

Where provisions are being made for day care, it is apparent that no one type of care can meet all need. Too often facilities are not used to capacity because mothers are not aware of available resources; because they fail to meet particular needs, such as twenty-four-hour service for women working on late shifts; or because they are inaccessible, due to transportation difficulties, as in rural areas. Children are often withdrawn because mothers find it too hard to continue to work or because the separation is too

trying on the child. Difficulties in securing trained personnel and foster homes also affect continued service.

In many communities, effective day care programs are not possible because of a general lack of awareness or even disregard of need. There has also occurred opposition to such programs by local groups who object to mothers going to work.

The financing of programs has been one of the chief obstacles to further development. Federal funds have been appropriated in twenty communities or states. In only four are present arrangements considered satisfactory.

Expanded services with broader coverage than is possible under present stipulations are needed. It is felt that emphasis should be on need rather than on the ability to "match money" or to meet a share of cost. Where facilities have not been obtained it would seem to be because there is no local participation, or because the cost to parents is prohibitive. Programs should be based on the varied needs of children, and should stress services rather than physical facilities. In rural communities and smaller cities where there has been no community welfare program, new services should be made available. The administration of funds has been "bungled by local politics," and hampered by the absence of a clear-cut program.

Present appropriations do not provide for additional staff to expand services, or for counseling, publicity and parent education work. More experienced leadership, supervision, and standards of care are also desired.

#### *Legislation—Thomas Bill*

The Thomas bill to expand present facilities and to provide additional essential services, under the auspices of the U. S. Children's Bureau and the Office of Education, through local welfare and educational agencies, is supported by 22 agencies. They feel that its proposals would correct many of the limitations of existing programs; that funds could be better allocated through the Children's Bureau, which is closer to the varied needs of children than the Federal Works Agency; that private agencies which can see the total needs of the different types of care should be subsidized; and that higher standards of care, through qualified supervision, should be assured.

Some opposition to the bill is expressed on the grounds that there may be a "set-back if present arrangements are disturbed," and the fact that facilities would have to discontinue during the transition



from one Federal agency to another. Local administration is considered a drawback where politics and particular groups have prevented day care programs.

In three replies, objections are raised because coverage is not broad enough "nor is it clear enough as to intent." The committee on day care of a state council of defense wants to go beyond the provisions of the Thomas bill, and proposes that there should be a "Federal subsidy that will permit full Federal financing of child care centers during a reasonable demonstration period . . . not a too specific formula that will obstruct, delay or defeat the program by permitting controversial issues between the various local political units of government."

The bill urges "A definition of children to be served, to be broad enough to include all children who need part-time daily custodial care due to conditions of war-production military service, housing or nutrition (problems) that have ensued as a result of a war-impacted area." And their objection is that the phrase, "children of employed mothers," excludes children of mothers who wish to assure themselves of the child's adaptation to care before they accept employment, the mother in unpaid training, the mother laid off for illness, the children of widowers or otherwise fathers left as sole guardians of children, or other regular guardians of children whose services may be needed in the war effort.

#### *Coordinated Community Action*

It is perhaps inevitable that any program to meet needs which are only high-lighted by emergency conditions should reflect the attitudes of the community regarding planning for children. Indifference to the needs of children and lack of coordinated efforts have blocked the successful functioning of programs: "Where services have never been adequate, they are unequipped to meet war-time demands." The retarded development of social agencies, lack of trained personnel, and low standards of service become apparent in the face of greater needs. Other social conditions in the community, housing, schools, and recreation, are related to the effectiveness of child welfare programs. The mental hygiene implications of emotional tension and instability among adults, disturbances in family life, changes in communities cannot be ignored in planning for large groups of children.

Responsibility for providing emergency services has been assumed by different groups. It is chiefly where there have been joint planning and coordinated efforts that a broad program has emerged, geared to the real diversity of child care needs.

#### A state department of welfare describes its work:

"It was felt important that there should be one main committee in the state to be concerned with children in wartime. This committee included membership from the various state departments concerned with children—education, welfare, health, finance; from U. S. Employment Service, representatives of the labor groups, private agencies, civic and service groups.

"The Child Welfare Services program is now carried on through the Children in Wartime Committee of state and local defense councils with a full time secretary of the local council paid for through State Department of Social Security funds in several of the major defense areas.

"The need for the development of preventive programs is recognized and localities are urged to stimulate the further use of all the private social and health agencies, as well as the law enforcement agencies, in bringing about better facilities for the care of children."

Only such broad planning can go beyond partial and superficial measures to deal with juvenile delinquency and neglect. It assumes a responsibility to substitute and supplement the care of which children are deprived now as a result of war. It points to aggressive action that must be taken if the interests of children are to receive priority not only for the winning of the war, but for the enjoyment of the peace.

#### **Herschel Alt Heads J. B. G.**

MRS. SIDNEY C. BORG, president of the Jewish Board of Guardians, social work agency for delinquent and disturbed children and one of the participating organizations of the Federation of Jewish Charities of New York, announced the appointment of Herschel Alt as Executive Director. Mr. Alt succeeds Dr. John Slawson, who left the Jewish Board of Guardians this month to become Executive Vice-President of the American Jewish Committee.

Mr. Alt came to the Jewish Board of Guardians in June, 1941, as Director of Hawthorne-Cedar Knolls School, the institution maintained in Westchester County for the treatment of boys and girls with special problems.

Previous to this he had a long experience in organizations devoted to the treatment of personality problems of children. He had been the general secretary of the St. Louis Children's Aid Society and general manager of the St. Louis Provident Association for over ten years.

Mr. Alt has been a leader in civilian defense and professional organizations. He has just completed an assignment as regional evacuation officer for the Second Civilian Defense Region of the U. S. Civilian Defense Office.

He has been a member of the National Board of Directors of the American Association of Social Workers and is at present Secretary of the Board of the Child Welfare League of America.

In the welfare field, Mr. Alt has served as an educator, research expert and administrator since 1923.

[Due to the printer's transposition, two lines were inserted in second instead of in first column. We are reprinting Dr. Gildea's review in its entirety in its correct context.]

AN INTRODUCTION TO GROUP THERAPY, by S. R. Slavson, The Commonwealth Fund, N. Y. 1943.

This timely and well-constructed book opens with a foreword by Dr. George S. Stevenson, clearly formulating the difficulty encountered by the psychiatrist who tries to understand a child on the basis of the office interview alone, or treat him without the resources offered by a well-integrated community organization. Group technique, although not a new method, is newly coming to the fore as a valuable adjunct to the psychiatric interview in arriving at an understanding of the behavior of the whole child. Childhood conscious mental content gives us much less grasp on the problems of the individual than does observation of behavior, and behavior is most significant when it approaches most closely the patterns of activity in the ordinary social setting of the individual child. Therefore, carefully built-up groups of children offer an opportunity to see the child perform under circumstances reproducing, as nearly as possible, the varied pattern of everyday life, and serve as well a psychotherapeutic purpose. Through the close correlation with all welfare agencies that is part of the group technique described here, the worker or psychiatrist is helped to knit his program closely into the entire community scene. That the dynamics of group activity are therapeutic is clearly shown; but an extremely important point insufficiently emphasized here is that group therapy, as one sort of psychotherapy, can be an immense resource for dealing with the overwhelming volume of problems presented daily to the community clinic, the social agencies, and the juvenile courts. This pressure is especially overwhelming now because of wartime exigencies and increasing application for service in the face of ever-increasing shortages of personnel.

Dr. Slavson opens with a clear presentation of the theory and technique of group therapy as practised in his agency. He describes the "permissive" atmosphere in which the therapist accepts the child "fully with all his faults, shortcomings, destructiveness, and hostilities," and says that the aim of such an environment is in effect to remove the anxiety-producing super ego. Thus the child is allowed to act out his impulses and see them rebound against the personalities of his confrères. The role of therapist is in part to be a blank screen, on which the child can project the images of his emotional needs. Great care is used

in the balance of each group so that aggressive instigating children are coupled with passive followers and average children in order that an equilibrium can be maintained as well as a constantly dynamic active "climate."

The author is least secure when he goes over into the field of psychiatric or psychological diagnosis and describes eight different types of children: the hyperkinetic, motor, originative, phantasy-laden, autistic, egoic, schizoid, and emasculated boy. He says that it is his impression that "in many such people egoicity proceeds from organic or constitutional sources." No objection would be raised to his using the above descriptive categories if he would use these adjectives to describe trends in personalities rather than absolute types. I feel he should also include warmth or coolness of temperament, and oppose hyperkinetic by hypokinetic, schizoid by cycloid. Most psychiatrists would agree that these trends exist, and are built up (as he says of the egoic alone) on a constitutional anlage. The failure of group therapy probably depends less on the presence or absence of any single personality trait, than it does on an imbalance of the entire personality which prevents the patient from forming relationships.

Particularly impressive is the author's understanding of the therapeutic process through transference and through the inchoate medium of "group climate" and dynamics. He emphasizes an important point in discussing the influence of the character of the therapist, and the necessity for the therapist to maintain his character as a firm constant against which the children may struggle to form their own personalities and individuality. This is also the function of the good parent of an adolescent: to maintain and express through the atmosphere of the home the finer groundwork of his character so that the developing child has a firm foundation against which to push when he is struggling to establish his own identity. A completely permissive atmosphere too long maintained may allow the child needing a foothold to sink to his knees in quicksand, and hinder the development of his needed super ego. Dr. Slavson understands this problem well, and also expresses forcefully the importance of productive activity in the development of the organization of energy flow or good habit patterns. This book forms a solid basis on which the thoughtful group therapist can build his own technique. It is a provocative and stimulating presentation.

—MARGARET C.-L. GILDEA, M.D.

St. Louis, Missouri

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## Christmas in a Children's Institution

MARJORIE WILSON

Member of the Board of DePelchin Faith Home and Children's Bureau, Houston, Texas

SOME years ago, when I was a very new member of the Board of Faith Home, I found myself wondering whether our Christmas program was as good as it could be. Somehow Christmas did not seem to mean to the children in the institution anything like what it had meant to my own children when they were little. A great deal of time and energy was being spent on it and a good deal of money, but the children were obviously not getting from it the satisfaction that they should, while the staff were getting so exhausted that it seemed that they had come to almost dread the holiday season.

It didn't take long to find out that I was not the only one who was concerned. Everyone I talked to had the same feeling of dissatisfaction and so a group of us got together to see what could be done. Our problem was to decide whether it was possible to plan a Christmas celebration for children who had to live in large groups that would give to them the same sort of satisfying experience that a child enjoyed in the normal family setting. And first of all we had to get quite clear in our own mind what was wrong with the present program.

The fault certainly did not lie in any lack of generosity on the part of the community. Everyone wanted the children to have the best possible sort of good time. During the week before Christmas there was every kind of entertainment offered—concerts, movies, carol singing and so forth; mountains of candy, nuts and fruits poured in and on Christmas Eve, when the climax of the festivities was reached, the children found on their beds a very generous response to the Santa Claus letters they had written. It was true that the gifts were collected somewhat haphazardly and there was enough difference in the way that people construed the children's requests to lead to some hurt feelings—still, as a rule, there were always enough to make a child happy.

And yet there was a certain feeling of anti-climax, and somehow the great moment for which the children had been waiting so long seemed to go a little flat. Some of the children were certain to be in tears before the evening was over, and frequently before the guests had even left the building the older ones had begun to trade their gifts back and forth, the sharper child always of course getting the best of the bargain.

Moreover, the supervisors told us that on Christmas Day itself the youngsters were never quite happy—many of them were fretful and lonely and the trading of the Christmas gifts seemed to be the main amusement. By evening many of the gifts were destroyed or damaged and the children did not behave as if they had any idea of the value of the things they were destroying.

It became very clear to us that there was something about the mechanics of the things that needed adjusting. That was to be expected with our rapidly growing population and was not so important. What really mattered was that somehow or other we had allowed the whole celebration to get out of focus.

When we reached this stage, it was not hard for us to get a step further. We realized that in our anxiety that the youngsters should receive gifts like other children, we had fallen into the mistake of putting the stronger emphasis on the wrong place. It is perfectly natural for everyone—big or little—to enjoy receiving gifts but it seems to be just as natural, especially at Christmas time, to enjoy giving them. And in either case, whether in giving or in receiving, a great deal of the value lies not so much in the gift itself as in the love and planning and effort that have gone into the preparation.

And yet at a season when the community was all agog over preparations for giving as well as for receiving, we had been keeping our children on the receiving end, a position especially unfortunate for the dependent child, and in so doing we were losing for them the real flavor and spirit of the Christmas season.

Having reached this stage of our thinking, we felt we were ready to do some definite planning. And first of all we had to find a simpler and more uniform system for assembling the children's gifts.

Most of the wards of Faith Home live in foster homes, but looking after this group for Christmas did not have to enter very largely into our plan. We had never done any buying for this group—it had always seemed more natural to give the money to the foster mothers so they could plan for our children along with their own. It was more personal and was more likely to give the youngsters a Christmas that was in keeping with that of the other children in the neighborhood. And, after all, that is what counts most.

It was for the one hundred thirty children in the institution that we had to reorganize the program—not only for the sake of the children but also to prevent the holiday from being an unnecessary tax on the professional workers.

At that time we were living in our old congregate building, with from thirty to forty children in each dormitory, and it seemed natural to take that grouping into consideration. Two lay people were asked to act as chairmen for each dormitory and to take full responsibility for assembling the gifts for their particular group. When the children wrote their Christmas letters they would be given to these chairmen along with lists of people in the community who enjoyed providing for the children. Some of these liked to do their own shopping, but where they preferred to send in the money instead, the chairman agreed to do the purchasing. In order to have some uniformity in the value of the gifts, \$3.00 was suggested as a reasonable amount and it was thought well not to use any second-hand toys. We hoped that this plan would mean more satisfying gifts and also that it would be a real help to the staff to have all contacts made outside the office, especially as each chairman was willing to assemble the gifts at her own house and check them before delivering them to Faith Home.

Then we felt ourselves ready to attach the more subtle part of our reorganization. A child living in a family group is aware from the beginning of all the fun of Christmas giving and of Christmas sharing and he gets the idea with all the aura of mystery and affectionate plotting that goes into the preparation. He imitates instinctively and very soon a pattern is formed. It is a very easy and natural thing to establish a tradition in a family circle.

In an institutional environment it is a little harder to establish this atmosphere and tradition. It does not develop quite so spontaneously and needs to be deliberately planned for. Since preparation for the children's own Christmas has to go on outside the building, they are not immediately conscious of it and there is no obvious activity for them to imitate. Moreover, the gifts are a little impersonal because the giving is done by people who are strangers to the children themselves. We have to admit also that when the children do have generous impulses, they are often frustrated because there is neither space nor materials in which to carry them out. We did hope, however, that with a little leadership we could overcome many of these difficulties and that by enriching the children's experience, we might be able to establish a wholesome Christmas tradition which could

then be passed on through succeeding groups of youngsters as they entered the Home.

Up to this time our planning group had consisted of a few professional workers and one or two lay people but at this stage we found we were needing the thinking of all the dormitory supervisors. They were the ones who had to bear the real brunt of Christmas activities and they were the ones who had real first-hand experience.

Our old congregate building did not lend itself to the atmosphere of mystery, secrets and affectionate plotting that were so dear to most of us from the days of our own childhood. There were no playrooms. The only space for the children's activities was the vacant space in the dormitories between the beds. The old institution kitchen, moreover, did not lend itself to amateur cookie and candy making so our resources were somewhat limited. There were assets, however, the most obvious being the personalities of the supervisors themselves. More than anyone else they were concerned with making Christmas a genuinely satisfying one for the children. It was a constant source of wonder to the rest of us how anyone could retain any imagination and initiative after caring for the physical needs of thirty or forty active youngsters but this group of women had certainly done so.

Thanks in the main to their suggestions, we were able to get a start that first year. Materials were collected so that when the spirit moved the children to make gifts for their friends, that spirit could be satisfied. Moreover, a wooden box was provided for each child so that his gifts in the making could be put out of sight. In each dormitory a crèche was set up for which the boys made the framework. We felt we were really getting somewhere when one of the supervisors suggested that the crèches should start on rather a small scale so that it could become a custom each year for the children to have the fun of selecting one or more additional little figures or animals. These crèches were really a success from the start and seemed to mean a great deal to the children. The little ones would hang over them day after day, telling and retelling the Christmas story to each other.

It had worried us a good deal that the children did not seem to have any very clear idea of values and thought nothing of breaking up toys rather deliberately. Perhaps if they had a little more first-hand experience with money it would help. It was made possible for them to earn a little pocket money and they were encouraged to go downtown and do their own Christmas shopping. Even that first year some of us found ourselves wishing humbly that they



would give us lessons in high finance. The little ones could not go downtown alone but we were able to interest a group of young women in escorting them two or three at a time. These volunteers were quick to catch the idea of standing sympathetically and intelligently in the background while the youngsters themselves consummated ambitious financial transactions with fortunes as large as fifteen cents. It was very interesting to find how spontaneously this program kept drawing in more and more of the lay group and this was happening in a way that gave most unusual opportunities for real interpretation of the whole child welfare program.

The various plans worked out so nicely that for the next few years there seemed no need to make any radical changes, but rather to develop more fully what had already been started. It was a good thing that we had felt that the dormitory chairman idea had worked for October was not even over when some of the chairmen had phoned to ask for their jobs back for another Christmas! This was the sort of thing that has made the whole Christmas experience a joy—that everyone who has been asked to help has seemed to love it and almost invariably comes back for more. It is probably a good thing that the professional staff has always kept so closely behind the program, for otherwise there might have been a real danger of it getting out of hand through the very enthusiasm that it produced.

It was the year before we moved into our new cottage type home that the children really got a jump ahead of us. They wanted to know why they could not go carolling. Church groups had always liked to come to sing carols at Faith Home and that had been all right with the children, but now they decided that they could sing just as well as their visitors and they were no longer content without an active share. The old station wagon got into action and some of the board members brought their cars and off went the youngsters. Everyone was so obviously glad to see them and everywhere they went they received such a welcome that the children came home glowing with pride. They did not realize it themselves and certainly could not have put it into words but with this venture they had begun to pass from the receiving end of the community Christmas to a very modest place on the giving end.

When we moved into our new home we certainly found ourselves in an atmosphere that was very much more conducive than before to the establishment of traditions whether Christmas or otherwise. The children now lived twenty in a cottage and two or three in a room. Everyone had his own place for

his treasured possessions and moreover there were playrooms and above all a cottage kitchen. Many of the Christmas problems showed signs of melting into thin air.

Our regular November meeting of supervisors, board and professional staff was a very gay affair that year. Now that the burden of the individual gifts had been taken off their shoulders, and each of them had only twenty children to mother instead of from thirty to forty, the supervisors were really able to look forward to Christmas with courage and enthusiasm. They all came to the meeting with some secret up their sleeves with which they planned that their cottage would surprise all the other cottages. Everyone had great fun over the mysteries and some of us wondered if that meeting was not providing one of the valuable by-products of the Christmas planning. There are not many occasions at a large agency that so many groups can get together to talk of something that is very dear to all of them.

In their new surroundings we found that the children felt themselves very much a part of the community picture and they took a very active part in all the Christmas activities at school and at church. It was interesting too the way community projects which became uniquely their own seemed to keep bobbing up.

One year the great excitement was the adopted grandparents. It was suggested to the children that some old people were lonely because they had no young people of their own to make them happy. The response was immediate. It is no small honor to suddenly become an adopted grandparent with twenty-three or twenty-four ready-made grandchildren and the workers over at Old Age Assistance had to take their responsibility very seriously in selecting the honorees. The children threw themselves heart and soul into the project. They saved their own fruit; they made candy; they made cookies; they potted plants. One group made their old lady—besides more prosaic gifts—a most ingenious window garden. A group of boys whose old friend happened to be English made him individual tea bags and supplied him with a cup and saucer and plenty of sugar lumps. And so forth. It would be hard to say who had the most happiness out of it—the adopted grandparents or the adopting grandchildren.

There is a sequel to the grandparent story that many of us love to tell. The small nine-year-old boys in the Blei Cottage decided that the gift that would make an old lady the happiest was a collection of quilt scraps, and they could not be moved from that decision. With their own pennies they bought quilt scraps at Kress's and sent them with enough material for mounting. Three months later a package arrived "For the Boys of the Blei Cottage."

(Continued on page 11)

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BULLETIN

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Henrietta L. Gordon, *Editor*

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### Mary Irene Atkinson

THE death of Mary Irene Atkinson on November seventh at her home near Clyde, Ohio, has removed from the children of this country, and from those who serve children, a friend and an intrepid leader.

Her affection for those she served and led kept her active at times when many would have considered themselves entirely disabled. The generosity with which she gave energy, without measuring the consequent reduction of her vitality, showed how deeply she felt and cared.

We of the Child Welfare League of America know how she enriched its work when she came to the staff in 1924. Her more recent service on the League's Board of Directors, of which she was a member at the time of her death, has kept us dependent upon her leadership. We find evidence of her effective administration of Child Welfare Services of the U. S. Children's Bureau in every state we enter. Her own Ohio will recall many occasions when, as a state official, she advanced standards for the care and protection of children.

She would greatly prefer that we limit the time spent on eulogy, that we close our ranks to fill her place and consider ourselves more obliged than ever before to sustain Child Welfare Services under the Social Security Act, along with the other essential work for children in which she so firmly believed and for which she so valiantly lived.

—HOWARD W. HOPKIRK

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### Areas of League Responsibility Studied by Board of Directors

TWENTY-FIVE guests, most of them from other national agencies concerned with the welfare of children, joined the League's Board of Directors at a luncheon and afternoon session on Friday, October 29th, to discuss various areas of League responsibility. The discussion was profitable both in helping the League plan its work and in drawing it closer to those national agencies whose representatives were in attendance.

The purposes of this part of the League's two-day Board meeting, as outlined by the chairman of the meeting, were threefold: first, to discuss some of the most important child welfare problems we are all facing at this time, with the hope that we could gain further clarification of them; second, to point up any uncovered areas of service to which we should be giving our attention; and third, to encourage joint planning of both an immediate and a long-range nature.

#### 1. Common Problems

The complexity of child welfare and the increasing interdependence upon one another of those who serve children are more apparent than ever before. The discussion of common problems concerned both young children and youth. Miss Katharine Lenroot, Chief of the U. S. Children's Bureau, brought us up-to-date on subjects such as maternal and infancy services, child labor, school attendance and delinquency. She warned of America's need to anticipate demobilization of its thousands of sixteen- and seventeen-year-old youths now enrolled in the ranks of industry.

With respect to the needs of youth, it was stated that the increase in delinquency is merely symptomatic of the general unrest and instability which is the lot of youth during a war period. The extensive employment of young people at wages far in excess of those they can expect to command in more normal times has already created problems and will create additional problems when industry demobilizes its youth. It should be the objective of every child-caring agency and parent in the country to keep all children and young people under eighteen years of age in school, except in unusual circumstances. A number of those present urged that our protective services be strengthened in communities throughout the country. Additional case work and group work services are needed widely as an aid to stabilizing home life and facilitating the constructive emancipation of youth from their parents. The services

required to prevent and treat delinquency were also stressed as paramount.

Miss Lenroot and others emphasized the need for an extension of medical care, particularly for young children and mothers. It was pointed out that there are now over 600,000 infant sons and daughters of servicemen whose mothers require some aid. Under the new wartime maternal aid measures, aid is being given to only about fifty percent of this group.

Stress was laid, furthermore, on the increased needs of children in minority groups, many of whom have never received the medical aid or social services accorded other groups. Added to this is the need for increased attention to those areas of the country long known as the most "disadvantaged" sections of our nation.

Riots and near riots in some of our congested areas during the last months have given further indication of the unrest of youth and have added to the serious picture of conflict with minority groups which was already observable before Pearl Harbor. It is obvious that, for the most part, local, state, and national social work agencies have not given sufficient leadership to the solution of this problem, a problem which is paramount to the welfare of the nation and the foundation of an adequate postwar world.

## 2. Uncovered Areas of Service

It was interesting to note that the afternoon's discussion did not reveal areas of service which were not in one way or another receiving the attention of the groups represented. It was pointed out time and again, however, that insufficient attention was being given to the foregoing problems and it was apparent that our sins of omission lay more in inadequate operation and in lack of complete team work rather than in functional omissions as such.

Mrs. Eugene Meyer, of the *Washington Post*, told of disgraceful evidences of neglect and delinquency observed in her tour of the United States. She compared our country with England, pointing to our more highly organized services but to England's more mature concept of what is involved in the care of her children. In all her travels in England she saw less distress among children than in the overcrowded industrial centers on this side of the Atlantic. She would have us think out a totally new standard of child welfare in the United States and then join together in holding our people to the fulfilment of that standard. There is danger, as we specialize in our services, that we will forget the entire child.

In a short and graphic comment, Mr. Linton W. Swift of the Family Welfare Association of America

pointed out the need for a network of services sufficiently meshed to provide for an integrated and frontal attack on the problems under discussion. It was pointed out by others that although we came to the meeting to discuss agency relations, it was significant that much of our time was spent in a consideration of joint action. There was general agreement that this was a significant trend and one that should be encouraged in terms of specific and practical suggestions for next steps.

Furthermore, if we have responsibility as a nation for all our children, it follows that such responsibilities cannot be bounded by geographical lines but that our obligations extend in these days to the children of the world.

It was suggested that the advertisers of the nation who are providing spectacular words and pictures concerning the war have not yet taken up the cudgel for the protection and development of the most precious asset of any nation, namely, its children.

Cheney Jones of Boston added further to this picture in quoting from a letter to him from a member of the United States Navy who said in effect, "When a man falls into the water, the whole fleet turns around to save him." Hence, the meeting came face to face with the searching question as to whether our whole organization for child welfare in the country is based upon a recognition of the needs of individual children. With a far-reaching perspective he pointed to some of the tasks lying ahead of the League and all who love children, among these tasks being the development of stronger relationships to the public schools.

## 3. Joint Planning

In this meeting, the experience of other similar meetings was repeated in that the group found it difficult to address itself to the actual techniques of joint planning. Harry Lurie put his finger on this difficulty when he said, "We do not seem to be conditioned to joint action. We make plans and issue reports but we fall down in the action phases." James Brunot of the Office of Community War Services and Shelby Harrison of the Russell Sage Foundation and Roswell Barnes of the Federal Council of Churches agreed that from their vantage point in observing national activities there was a serious gap in this fundamental phase of our operation. There was agreement too that we are still inclined to be absorbed by agency function rather than the necessity for planning and pushing a project on a joint basis. On the basis of comments made during

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## THE BOARD MEMBERS' COLUMN

INFORMATION AND PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE  
REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

THE Committee discussed the dual purpose of the BULLETIN which is, first, to provide, through articles written and contributed by workers in the field of child welfare, pertinent and sound professional material which will be of help to the Board and staff of the League's member agencies; secondly, to keep the members informed about general developments within or relative to this field, including the activities of the League.

This dual purpose is not easy to fulfil in such a small publication and the Committee appreciates the skill with which the editor has secured and selected articles, and her success in getting many of the busiest and best persons in social work to share their experiences and opinions with the League and its membership.

The Committee reports the receipt of many spontaneous expressions of approval of the calibre and coverage of the contents of the BULLETIN and interprets these as a desire for more material of this type, which can be supplied only in a larger magazine.

The Committee believes there is at present insufficient space for information about the many important projects in which members of the League's staff are participating throughout the United States, and for progress reports from the League's standing and special committees, and recommends that the Board consider ways and means of enlarging the scope of the BULLETIN.

The serious effects upon children of the war situation make it imperative that the League expand its media for exchange of information, opinion, experiences and planning. This necessity would require more editorial staff and more expenditure but it is felt that a more ambitious policy might bring adequate returns through an increased list of subscribers. Special demands for more articles on foster home finding, institutional care, juvenile delinquency, adoptions, day care for children of working mothers, clearly reflect the acute problems our agencies are facing today.

Another area which falls within the scope of this Committee is the Information Service which attempts to handle individual inquiries on an individual basis. This service absorbs much of the work which cannot be covered in the BULLETIN and answers all special requests made to the League for material and guidance relating to particular problems. Seven hundred inquiries were handled in the last year by

the editor of the BULLETIN. These covered more than fifty subjects and taxed even the resourcefulness, the encyclopedic minds and the unfailing spirits of the entire staff. They included questions about administration, organization, case work, training, war services, interpretation and others. Such a demand for assistance shows the alertness and concern of the inquirers, an eagerness to meet new needs in the best ways known to the League's staff or constituency.

During this same year 556 books, reprints, conference papers, etc., were circulated in answer to definite requests showing in still another way the increasing use of professional material channeled through the League to its membership.

The committee wishes to invite broader use of the "Board Member Column" section of the BULLETIN. This column had been made available as a medium for exchange of experience and ideas of members of the Boards of member agencies.

The committee also desires to see this column used for the whole area of relationships of Boards to their communities, their councils of social agencies, their own agency programs and their professional services. This would bring forth stimulating and valuable data and discussions.

—E. MARGUERITE GANE

*Chairman, Committee on Information and Publications*

## The Interpreter's Column

*Every month, the National Publicity Council for Health and Welfare Services, 130 East 22d Street, New York, N. Y., discusses the contents of the BULLETIN from the standpoint of its possibilities for community education.*

As the staff of the National Publicity Council reads the advance copy for the issue of the BULLETIN, it seemed to us that this month's readers can take a publicity tip from every one of the articles.

Marjorie Wilson's highly readable and human "Christmas in a Children's Institution," should make every children's worker ask himself the question, "How often, in my interpretation, do I present my clients, the children, as young people capable of giving as well as receiving?" If most social agencies, including the others as well as children's agencies, will look back over their annual reports, booklets, bulletins and newspaper releases of the past year, it will be immediately evident that the client, be he adult or child, is most often presented as a person in need to whom something, usually service, was given.

In the case of foster home publicity it is most often the foster mother as the *giver* whom the public reads about, very seldom the foster child as a giver of rich experience to the foster family. A social worker said the other day, "Sometimes I think that I should hate my clients to read the things I write to the public about them." There are many reasons for "stigma of charity" which social agencies are trying to throw off, but surely one of them is the tone of our publicity in which, in our efforts to arouse the community to support our work, we too often present the client as an object of pity and not often enough as a self-respecting human being capable of giving as well as receiving.

True, the tangible giving by small children is hard to describe, but it is undeniably true that our constant presentation of children in the care of social agencies as the "underprivileged," with all the connotations that go with that word, has been one of the stumbling blocks to the wider use of children's agencies. After all, that use, except in the case of foundlings, must usually be sought by an adult in the child's family who does not like his being "underprivileged." As long as social agencies describe their clients as poor, helpless people who must always receive and never give, we will never climb out of the trough into which we have gotten ourselves. All this is especially curious when in our daily service to clients we respect them as givers in many ways. Why is it that we feel, then, that the public will respond less quickly if we present our clients in this true light in which we picture them ourselves?

In "War Programs and Legislation for Child Care," Mrs. Turitz mentions several times that public ignorance and misunderstanding are stumbling blocks to good programs to combat rising juvenile delinquency. The answer here, however, is not merely *more* publicity but the deeper question of *what kind* of publicity to give to this problem. It is highly questionable whether, if it is young people we are trying to attract, it is wise to describe our recreation programs to the public in the way in which we talk about them to ourselves—as measures to combat delinquency. Somehow "combatting juvenile delinquency" doesn't sound much like fun. Also, disturbing evidence is beginning to show itself that in some cases by the unwise use of "rising juvenile delinquency" statistics we have helped to popularize exactly the thing we have been trying to combat. Viola Paradise, in the current issue of *Channels*, the Publicity Council's magazine, writes a very constructive and revealing article on this subject of "juvenile delinquency" publicity, entitled "Our Children at War."

The little report from Dayton on the cooperation of the press in a foster home campaign proves several valuable lessons. Dayton had a *plan* for securing this cooperation; the plan included personal visits to the editors with a letter of explanation beforehand; supporting information was given but the agency did not make the mistake of trying to insist that every word appearing in the paper be dictated and controlled. The newspaper men here were made to feel like partners in solving a community problem.

Partners in interpretation, too, were the foster mothers in "An Adventure with a Group of Foster Mothers." The people whom our agencies serve are, after all, our first public, and, more often than we realize, our most potent interpreters.

### Christmas in a Children's Institution

(Continued from page 7)

It was the material back again now in the form of a quilt with the silhouettes on it of twenty-four little boys and under each silhouette was embroidered the name of one of the little boys themselves. It came, "With love from your affectionate Adopted Grandmother." The quilt has hung ever since on the wall of the Blei Cottage and has definitely achieved the status of a precious heirloom.

The next Christmas, Bundles for Britain had an emergency call—sixty rag dolls had to be made at once and it seemed impossible to get anyone to make them. Then someone who had heard the adopted grandparent story thought of Faith Home. Would our children help? The youngsters agreed with the most matter of fact dignity. They not only made the dolls but every doll left for England with an extra pair of pajamas pinned on its shoulder and a tiny handkerchief in its pocket. That an organization like Bundles for Britain had thought of our children, not in terms of someone to whom they could give something, but as a group which had a real service to offer, seemed in itself something of a milestone.

Three years ago one of the case workers suggested at our November meeting that the children should have their own carol service. It was an experiment and one of the churches lent us the surplices. But right away we realized that we might as well get busy and make our own surplices for while everything else kept changing on the campus this was really something that had come to stay. Simple as it was the youngsters managed to put into that little service a sweetness and a dignity that won their way right into the heart of everyone who heard them. It was the loveliest way to usher in the Christmas season and it was not only the children who felt that way about it.

Interestingly enough, we are finding now that the carol service seems to be on its way to solving the

only controversial question that has ever come up in relation to Christmas. Any interested person in the community has always felt free to visit the Home when the children were opening their Christmas packages. The visiting had not really been overdone but there was a feeling that it was to some extent an invasion of the children's privacy and that guests should be limited to the children's immediate relatives and friends. We had never quite come to an agreement on this for there had been much to say on both sides. Now, however, we are finding that the drawing power of the carol service is so great that the attendance on the Christmas party is automatically falling. Without our having to take any action it looks as if the problem will solve itself.

The children always have put on a little play on Christmas Eve and then there is a wild rush back to the cottages. Anyone who has any fears that the children may be getting too serious minded need only see that stampede to be entirely reassured! Every cottage has its own Christmas fireplace and its own Christmas tree and the packages are piled up under the tree in all the glory of their gay wrappings. Thanks to the spirit that the cottage chairmen put into their task, it is very rarely that the gift to any child does not measure up to his expectations. There are no tears and there is no call to do any trading of gifts when a fellow gets at the outset the very things he has wanted the most.

On the morning of Christmas Day itself each individual cottage has one last little celebration. For many children this is the time which they find the most satisfying. It is a custom that has gradually grown up out of a real need and there is something a little touching in its evolution. It seems to be an effort on the part of the supervisors and of the children to take out of Christmas Day any possible feeling of flatness, and even more, to capture a little of the intimate feeling that is so easy to lose when large numbers have to be planned for together.

First of all, the children got the idea of hanging up their stockings round their Christmas fireplace before they went to bed. It was one of the Christmas chairmen who put that idea into their heads. The stockings have of course to be opened in the morning. Then the children got into the habit of exchanging gifts with one another. They could not really get the full fun out of these on Christmas Eve—there wasn't time and they were liable to get swamped in the larger gift giving. It was lots of satisfaction to have them under the tree on Christmas morning.

Then there were the most important packages of all, the little gifts that kept coming in from their own

fathers and mothers. The children loved these most—they meant something no other gift could. There had never been any very good time for opening gifts, but now Christmas morning gives them a dignity and the very special privacy that the opening demands.

I think it was the story of little Mary that made us fully realize this feeling of the children about their parents' gifts. Her father had been sent to the penitentiary for ten years but there was a deep affection between him and the little girl. One year he sent her a little china tea set. At first she slept with it and after that she kept it in her locker. After school every day she would leave the other children and slip up to the dormitory and play with the tea set all by herself. The reverent way in which she handled the cheap little cups left no doubt in anyone's mind that in spirit she was visiting with her daddy—the only contact that was left to her to have. Somehow a youngster needs so much someone of his own flesh and blood to cling to and it is very easy at times for us to lose sight of the fact.

Recently when some of us tried to evaluate the whole program, we thought that on the whole the original objectives had been reached. We had a simple machinery which was insuring the children Santa Claus letters, a great deal of individual attention and this was done in a way that had lifted a real burden from the shoulders of the staff. The gifts had real value now for the children and they themselves were most active in preparing for their own side of the giving. Moreover, they had put themselves in a position where they were really giving something that added to the community spirit.

We were pleased with that but what interested us most was that we found there were other assets which had not been anticipated but which seemed to have developed as by-products, as it were, of the program.

The staff and the board, for example, seemed to have been brought closer together. The case work staff and the institution staff had worked together at all times but now they seemed to be having a chance for more personal association. Moreover the board was getting a chance it had not had before to get a bit closer into the "family circle." Altogether a very pleasant sort of relationship was being fostered between the groups—one that could not but be carried over into other phases of the agency's work.

Then there was the way in which the lay people were participating. There had been a definite piece of work that needed doing and with that in mind we had asked a group of young women to act as chairmen at Christmas time. Each of these had her own group of friends to help her, and over the ten years the program had been developing a very considerable number had been drawn in. It was a work they had greatly enjoyed doing, and in doing it they had not only made a very real contribution but had themselves developed a very real understanding of the work of Faith Home. Some of these women are now



board members and many who otherwise might never have come in contact with the work of Faith Home are now among our most staunch adherents.

There were other groups also who were helping. Some were taking the little ones to do their Christmas shopping; others were taking them in the evenings to see the Christmas lights. There were always those who stood ready to be called on in any emergency. And then there were always the very large group who supplied the actual money and gifts and those who attend the carol service. It seems to us that just as a matter of publicity and interpretation the program has been worth all the time and attention that had gone into it.

And even then we had not counted all the fun we had had out of it! There are plenty of faults still about the Christmas program, but there is certainly something about it that is very lovable.

### Areas of League Responsibility Studied by Board of Directors

(Continued from page 9)

the meeting and afterward, the following suggestions emerged with respect to joint activity:

1. It was suggested that we might formulate a set of principles to be presented to the two main political parties as a part of their platforms based on the needs of families and children in this and the postwar period.
2. It was urged that the national agencies here represented devise how they might join hands in making a frontal attack on child labor, child protection, extension of educational opportunities, and the provision of health facilities for the children of America.
3. It was suggested that the group should interest itself in large measures and movements such as are sometimes expressed in a legislative form and to this end that the Child Welfare League or the League in cooperation with other national agencies should employ a Washington representative to keep them in touch with movements of national importance.
4. It was recommended that the national agencies present inaugurate some discussion on the local level in which local and national representatives would participate and in which the purpose would be to point up the needs on the local level and any inadequacies in the services of the national agencies in so far as the local level is concerned.
5. It was urged that a group such as this should give its attention jointly to the latest White House Conference Report and to pertinent aspects of the Report of the National Resources Planning Board with the idea that a specific national program for children might be promoted. The Chairman pointed out that in working out any plans such as the above, clearance should be had with the National Social

Work Council whose executive could not be present on this occasion.

Subsequent to this meeting, the President of the Child Welfare League of America appointed a committee of the League's Board to go over the minutes of the meeting and to suggest what steps might be taken in the way of follow-up. Any suggestions brought forth by this committee will be circulated to all who attended the meeting on October 29. Comments, criticisms, and suggestions are urgently sought in connection with this memorandum which is being circulated to all who attended the meeting.

—LEONARD W. MAYO

*President, Child Welfare League of America*

### Notes from League's Board Meeting

OUT of the discussion at its Friday afternoon session, mentioned in the preceding article, and the Board's later review of the principal findings, it was agreed that the League's standing committees and the Board itself will assume responsibilities for increased activity throughout the winter and that a special meeting of the Board should be held, probably in January.

The Committee on the Relations of Family and Child Welfare Agencies gave a report of progress and promises important findings for early consideration by the entire Board.

The Committee on Day Care expects to hold a meeting in the near future and with nearly a year passed since the National Association of Day Nurseries was taken over by the League, there is much to review in planning our next steps in this important area of service. A film on day care, "Children of Mars," by Pathe News, was seen by most of those in attendance. Another movie, also being released through commercial theaters at this time, "Youth in Crisis," by March of Time, was shown our Board at a special preview. Those who saw both films commended them to our members.

The League's participation in American War-Community Services was carefully reviewed. Early steps to add to the staff of the League for duration activities were approved. The war chest campaigns now being held are bringing funds into the treasury of the A.W.C.S., and the League's share of these funds will promptly be put to the use for which they were raised.

International activities in behalf of children received more attention than at any recent session of the League's Board. The transmission for republication of some of the League's monographs by microfilm to China was reported. There was discussion also of the League's increasing interests in child welfare in Latin-America, and in Europe.

—HOWARD W. HOPKIRK

## An Adventure with a Group of Foster Mothers

THE need for foster homes became so acute—the scarcity so alarming—that we turned for help to our foster mothers, a fertile source of new foster homes in the past. The methods used in the past by our foster mothers were, we knew, no longer sufficiently effective and together we would have to find new ways to meet the needs of children who have lost their own homes. And so we called a meeting of eleven foster mothers who were selected on the following basis:

1. Those who had satisfying foster mother experiences.
2. Those who evidenced some interest in helping to find new foster homes.
3. Those who had some community contacts.
4. Those who could accept and use a group experience to help them interpret our program to the community.

This group, together with a member of the Board and three workers, met regularly twice monthly for five months, these sessions culminating in the organization and management of a large meeting which included every foster mother in this district.\*

This committee leadership started with the premise that the foster mothers wanted to help find foster homes as soon as they really understood the urgency. Though a self-determined group as to method, the purpose—finding new foster homes—was clearly defined for them and accepted by them. Because of their deep feeling for the welfare of all homeless children, these foster mothers wanted to become identified with our agency in its total function—and so they went beyond taking care of their own foster children and concerned themselves seriously with this unknown group of children.

The following program was planned to interest people in becoming foster parents:

1. Talks with friends, relatives, and neighbors about foster care.
2. Contacts with organizations to which they or their husbands belonged.
3. A door-to-door canvass in groups of two in selected neighborhoods.
4. Radio talks, articles in school papers and neighborhood periodicals.
5. Distribution of expository leaflets in public parks, stores and markets.

As soon as the foster mothers began to put into effect their self-planned program, they discovered that these new methods of finding foster homes were "startling" in many unexpected ways. This was so

different from their past experience in talking to a friend or relative in their own living rooms about becoming a foster mother. This was really "selling" the service to "strange people" in the community. This was indeed different. What was the difference? What were they selling? Why should they be concerned with homefinding? This brought them to a greater questioning about what they really knew and felt about the agency.

Fortified with the security of their own rich and satisfying experiences as foster mothers they were able to begin their search for new foster homes with assurance and enthusiasm. They found at once in this activity a complete reactivation of their early emotions about becoming a foster mother and a reliving of their feelings around their foster children. These feelings, common in varying degrees to the group, were entangling and retarded the home-finding activity. Therefore, though our purpose was home-finding, in order to help the foster mothers interpret the need of the agency effectively, group discussion for clarification of their own feelings was necessary. In our group discussions we examined together the questions which were aroused by these feelings.

Starting with the premise that it was simple to "sell" a service which they themselves were doing, they wondered why they met with resistance and rejection. This challenge was difficult—even more so when those whom they referred withdrew after office contacts. What kind of interviews did we have, since in only about one-fourth of the homes referred was the foster home study completed? They recalled their own foster home study process and remembered that despite their own eagerness to become foster mothers, this experience had been rather disturbing. Moreover, they had come to our agency out of their own spontaneous desire while those whom they were sending were being stimulated to this interest and were therefore often coming on a wave of emotion which could not always be sustained. Out of these discussions grew the suggestion that our foster home study should be geared to meet this new situation—perhaps our "first interview" should be modified.

As they continued their search for foster homes, many troubling questions were asked them: "Can we say the foster child is our niece or nephew and not mention the agency?" The foster mothers, too, had struggled with this problem many times and could feel the full significance of this question. "I would not be able to give up a foster child." The foster mothers had experienced the real meaning of sharing a child with parents and with the agency and of a child's leaving too, but they knew that what they gave was really never lost to the child. Out of the

\* This agency has four district offices.

challenge of these questions, the foster mothers in the group discussion articulated how moved they were by the real and deep satisfaction their own foster children gave them. These foster mothers felt that they had something so precious they wanted others to have it and were puzzled and impatient, too, by slowness in response. Again, in reminiscing, how clearly it came back to them that they too had swayed towards and away from taking a foster child, and then they began to understand and be tolerant with the doubts and waverings of those whom they were trying to refer to the agency.

And so, by talking it over in the group, came the realization of the similarity of their feelings, a better understanding of themselves as foster mothers and a clearer knowledge of the agency's function so that they were able to carry this over to those whom they were approaching. The assurance which they gained from this experience lessened their own feeling of frustration when results were slow. Their concern about the mere numbers of people they referred to the agency diminished and they became more discriminating in their selectivity. The value of interpreting and spreading the foster home program in the community took on importance and, as they put it, "a seed sown in the Bronx produces fruit in Queens."

It is difficult to estimate accurately the number of homes that this group of foster mothers were able to secure for the agency. Many came in rather a roundabout way—a relative or "a friend of a friend" of someone whom a member of this committee had approached.

Out of this brief experiment came indications of possible values for the agency worth further exploration and examination. We learned that foster mothers can identify themselves with the agency in its total program, that they want this new identification and that they feel their added importance to the agency. They feel a new kind of loyalty to the agency when we ask them to share with us the responsibility of our need for new homes. It is of interest to note that in several instances the workers found that this new relationship of the foster mother to the agency resulted in a more constructive situation for the foster child. The fact is not new that we in foster home placement have learned much from our foster parents and in this agency this knowledge has bit by bit become an integrated part of our case work practice and philosophy. In this "Adventure with Foster Mothers," the workers were helped to understand so much better what it really means to become and be a foster mother. It emphasized again for us the importance of understanding and using the

basic concepts of foster home care—the meaning of agency supervision as it relates to the difference in caring for one's own child and a foster child. And more—by this closeness in working together we learned that their interest and ours in homeless children is similar.

—SARA HARRIS

*Supervisor, Foster Home Bureau of the  
New York Association for Jewish Children*

## NEWS FROM THE FIELD

### A Work-Study Plan

AT this point we are still attempting to find people who meet our standard of Masters' degree graduate work to make up the bulk of our case work staff. However, we have inaugurated for both our agencies a work-study plan as a means of developing manpower for the future. We are trying the experiment of employing on a part-time basis (approximately three-fifths time) a small group of people who will spend the balance of their time studying at the school of social work until they get their Masters' degrees. The academic part of the program should take them about two chronological years. They will get field work credit for the work they do with us under controlled conditions agreed upon between us and the school.

We are trying to find people of maturity, with some experience and, if possible, with part of their social work training completed. They become regular members of the staff, are paid in accordance with our salary scale and the proportion of time they work, and will gradually build up a case load just as any beginning worker might. The only real difference between them and the other part-time workers on our staff is the plan under which they do finish their graduate work at the rate agreed upon between us and the school, the field work conditions we have agreed upon and the greater care in selection which we are using since we are making this much investment in them. At present we have only one of these on the Children's Aid side of the work and four in our family districts.

*St. Louis Provident Association  
St. Louis Children's Aid Society*

### Correction

We regret that, due to a transposition of lines, the review of "An Introduction to Group Therapy," by Dr. Margaret C.-L. Gildea, was somewhat unintelligible. A corrected reprint is enclosed with this BULLETIN.



## BOOK NOTE

THE SUBNORMAL ADOLESCENT GIRL. Theodora M. Abel and Elaine F. Kinder. New York: Columbia University Press, 1942. 215 pp. \$2.50.

This book focuses attention on a group too little understood and too often neglected in our social planning—those individuals whose mental defect is not severe enough to necessitate custodial care and yet impose difficulties in adjustment beyond those encountered by the normal. To quote the authors: "The greatest obstacles to the scientific study and care of the subnormal girl are wide-spread prejudices and the prevalence of erroneous ideas as to the causation and treatment of the condition of subnormality." This book should do a great deal to correct these prejudices and false notions, which unfortunately are not limited to the layman.

The authors have limited their study to adolescent girls between the ages of fourteen and nineteen, inclusive, who fall within the high-grade subnormal group, including the so-called dull normal, borderline, and moron intelligence levels (I. Q.'s between 50 and 89). This is a clinical study in which chief emphasis is placed on the girl's point of view and the difficulties which she faces in adjusting to her environment. In the first chapter, the authors have described the characteristics of the subnormal girl which differentiate her from the normal, stressing at the same time the individual differences found among subnormals in their mental functioning and behavior. Subsequent chapters deal with the problems faced by the subnormal girl in her adjustment to home, school, industry, and institution. The authors have shown that the subnormal girl has many of the same feelings and needs as do her contemporaries, and that for her, as for the normal, the atmosphere of the home and the attitudes of society as exemplified by its schools, institutions, and laws are important factors in determining her attitudes, behavior, and ultimate adjustment. She has potentialities for becoming a worthwhile, adjusted member of society and, on the other hand, for becoming the misfit, the delinquent, or the criminal, who may require permanent institutional care.

While emphasis has been placed on the difficulties which the condition of subnormality imposes on the girl herself, attention has also been given to the community aspects of the problem—the assets and liabilities of the subnormal as a member of the community, the effects of her adjustment or maladjustment on others and on society as a whole, and the more theoretical questions of the origin and control of subnormality.

Many questions are raised in this book which should challenge those who are responsible for dealing with subnormal adolescents both within and outside their homes. The task of planning wisely for this group is not an easy one. Some of the methods that we use create new problems as well as help solve existing ones. Special classes, for example, while making it easier for the subnormal girl to achieve, nevertheless emphasize her differences and increase her feelings of inferiority. Institutional placement, even in the best of institutions, creates additional problems in adjustment by virtue of the enforced transition from an emotionally significant environment to an impersonal setting, with its routinized existence and its curtailment of liberty and of spontaneity. No less important, and yet often overlooked, are the difficulties encountered by the subnormal in readjusting to the community upon her release from the institution.

The authors have approached their task with a deep interest and understanding. Thus their book, while thoroughly scientific and devoid of sentimentality, is warm and alive. They have written simply and clearly of their subjects and have provided a wealth of pertinent and interesting illustrative material taken from case records and from the conversations of the girls themselves. This book makes an important contribution to our understanding of the manifold problems which subnormality creates for the individual and for society and should challenge those who as social workers, educators, clinicians or institution workers are responsible for the care of the subnormal.

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### Available for Circulation to Members, Affiliates and Associates

THE EFFECTS OF THE WAR ON CHILDREN. As reported by citizens of New York State at public hearings held under the auspices of the State Board of Social Welfare, May, 1943.

WHY CHILDREN'S WORKERS WANT LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST PROSTITUTION, by E. Marguerite Gane, *Journal of Social Hygiene*, October, 1943.

THEY ARE ALL OUR CHILDREN, by Otto Zoff, *Survey Graphic*, November, 1943.

RELATIONS AMONG PLAY INTERESTS AND DELINQUENCY IN BOYS, by Dale B. Harris, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, October, 1943.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE IN THE TREATMENT OF TWENTY-FIVE TRUANTS AT A CHILD GUIDANCE CLINIC, by Joseph Andriola, *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, October, 1943.

PROTECTIVE CASE WORK AND THE FAMILY AGENCY, by Dorothy Berkowitz, *The Family*, November, 1943.